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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/WE, NEA/I, NEA/IR

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SUBJECT: S/I SATTERFIELD MEETING WITH SPANISH PRESIDENCY
SECGEN BERNARDINO LEON ON FEBRUARY 12

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Classified By: Charge D'Affaires Arnold Chacon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Ambassador Satterfield, accompanied by Charge, briefed Spanish Secretary General of the Presidency, Bernardino Leon, on recent developments in Iraq, as well as Iraq's regional engagement with Arab states on February 12. Referring to the February 11 meeting (reported septel) in which he asked FM Moratinos for Spanish participation in the NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I), Satterfield asked Leon if President Zapatero would consider the request and received an affirmative response. Leon said Spain would focus on Middle East policy during its EU Presidency and seek alternatives to the MEPP Quartet process that bred resentment among smaller EU countries. Leon also offered a readout of Iranian Speaker of Parliament Ali Larijani's February 9th meetings with President Zapatero and FM Moratinos in Madrid. According to Leon, Zapatero was unequivocal on the need for Iran to end its nuclear program. Zapatero told Larijani that destructive messages on Israel should stop. Zapatero said that Iran should take advantage of the U.S. opening and have trust in the new administration, emphasizing "the ball is in Iran's court, you (Iran) now need to show your willingness and determination." END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Ambassador Satterfield, accompanied by Charge, briefed Spanish Secretary General of the Presidency, Bernardino Leon, on recent developments in Iraq, as well as Iraq's regional engagement with Arab states on February 12. Referring to the February 11 meeting (reported septel) in which he asked FM Moratinos for Spanish participation in the NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I), Satterfield asked Leon if President Zapatero would consider the request. Leon said yes, and elaborated that he had just completed final edits on Zapatero's first speech on Spain's EU Presidency objectives for January-June 2010. Leon added that the Middle East would continue to be a major focus area for Spain and, "the Spanish EU Presidency is an opportunity to leave old debates about Iraq behind; this is the moment to transform Spain's political involvement as well." Ambassador Satterfield expressed appreciation for Spain's Iraqi judicial training efforts and noted that an additional NTM-I component would be highly valued. (Note: Calling the Charge later in the day on a different matter, Leon mentioned that he had spoken with Moratinos after meeting with Satterfield, and he confirmed that the NTM-I proposal was getting a positive reception. End note.)

SPANISH INTENTIONS FOR ITS JANUARY-JUNE 2010 EU PRESIDENCY

¶3. (C) With reference to the EU Presidency, Leon said that many small EU countries resented the Middle East Peace Process Quartet. After recent meetings in Egypt, several countries protested to the Czech FM that it was inappropriate in the EU framework to have the perception of an "exclusive club handling peace process issues. At the same time, Leon acknowledged that the EU-27 was unwieldy, so some new format would have to emerge. His team would be formulating ideas to be implemented during Spain's EU Presidency, building on Sweden's efforts during July-December 2009. Leon realized that two-thirds of the Presidency effort would be spent on internal EU political dynamics, but estimated that his team would spend a third of their effort on international policy.

IRAN: READ-OUT OF LARIJANI VISIT TO MADRID

¶4. (C) Leon shared details about Iranian Speaker of Parliament Ali Larijani's February 9th meetings with President Zapatero and FM Moratinos in Madrid. According to Leon, during Larijani's forty-minute session with Zapatero, he had the sense that Larijani was only revealing glimpses of what might have been his real thinking. Larijani was very cautious about not making any policy commitments. Similarly, when the Spanish pressed for one-on-one meeting formats, Larijani demurred and insisted on being accompanied by others in his delegation. Larijani said that Iran "liked the music" of U.S. willingness to engage in direct talks, but that it didn't see a specific course ahead. When Zapatero said that Iran should take advantage of the U.S. opening and have trust in the new administration, he emphasized, "the ball is in Iran's court, you now need to show your willingness and determination." In Leon's opinion, Larijani was very

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diffuse in his response and it was difficult to accurately gauge Iranian intentions.

¶5. (C) Describing Iran as having a "souk mentality", Leon said that internally, Iran had different schools of thought on its nuclear programs. Given Iranians ingrained need to negotiate, they automatically default to bargaining, even over the start of talks. They needed to receive an opening offer that allowed them to show the electorate that they were achieving gains over the U.S. to enhance their prestige. Leon agreed with Satterfield that Iranian negotiating teams were often comprised of individuals lacking empowerment to take decisions; they only presented tightly scripted dialogues without the ability to move the process forward. The Iranian system made it difficult to access true power centers and frustrated diplomatic efforts.

¶6. (C) According to Leon, Zapatero was unequivocal on the need for Iran to end its nuclear program. He said that Iran wouldn't find any sympathy in Europe for enrichment activities. If Iran's intention was truly only civil use of nuclear power, then it should utilize the P5 1 process to achieve its goals. Zapatero also told Larijani that Iran needed a constructive and intelligent policy - force was not helpful. If Iran showed it could be a positive actor, it could be viewed as a partner. Zapatero said that destructive messages on Israel should stop.

¶7. (C) Larijani said that the Iranians believed that the U.S. should change its Afghanistan policy and place less emphasis on Pakistan. In Iran's opinion, al-Qaeda was gaining strength; Pakistan was deteriorating and unreliable, Leon said Larijani implied that the U.S. should foster an alliance with Iran instead of further engagement with Pakistan. Satterfield said that was ironic given Iranian support for radical elements in Afghanistan, including the Taliban - actions speak louder than words. Leon said Iran seemed to be seeking a partnership with the U.S. in Iraq. Satterfield said that it was difficult to envision any such

Iranian goal, when Iran used Iraq as a platform to project its power elsewhere and ultimately sought U.S. defeat and humiliation that would raise Iran's influence in consequence.

Addressing Iranian influence more broadly, Leon said that in his impression, Hizballah learned its lesson in 2006 -- that links with Iran were not helpful -- and that Hamas had similar concerns about Iran's negative capacity to destroy. On Gaza, Larijani told Zapatero that Iran would focus on humanitarian efforts and reconstruction, claiming that the Palestinian Authority kept Gaza as a "huge refugee camp" to serve its own purposes. Zapatero stressed the need for political reconciliation among the Palestinians.

¶18. (C) COMMENT: As we have heard from various sources, Spain,s interest in the NTM-I proposal appears genuine, but they will want to be asked at a senior level from Washington.

Spain,s interest in close consultations with the U.S. on issues such as Iran, Middle East peace, and Latin America is genuine, but Washington should be aware that Spain, especially FM Moratinos, is sometimes overeager for the role of intermediary. In availing ourselves of Spain,s insights on and contacts in these regions, we will need to be clear about we do and do not want them to do. END COMMENT.

¶19. (U) This cable was cleared by S/I Satterfield.
CHACON